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ABSTRACT

The "Focus on Government" video series consist of four parts: (1) "Congress and the Legislative Branch"; (2) "The Presidency and the Executive Branch"; (3) "The Supreme Court and the Constitution"; and (4) "The Media and Public Policy." Each of these parts is approximately twelve minutes long and consists of six to seven short segments about key topics. The teacher's guide is designed to help students learn more about the processes and principles of American government. The guide is composed of four lessons. The topics of the lessons correspond to the four videotapes. The videotapes and teacher's guide should help students to: (1) gain a deeper understanding of the three branches of American government, as well as the "fourth branch"--the media; (2) compare and contrast the responses of Washington experts on key topics involving the Congress, the President, the Supreme Court, and the media; and (3) develop their own opinions on critical issues in American government. The activities in each lesson provide students with a variety of educational experiences, many of which develop higher-order thinking skills. All of the activities involve class discussions or small-group work. The active learning approach encourages students to go beyond recognition or knowledge of facts to begin analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating the issues and concepts under study. (LH)

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Focus on Government

VIDEO SERIES

TEACHER'S GUIDE

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Focus on Government

VIDEO SERIES

TEACHER'S GUIDE

Close Up Publishing

The Close Up Foundation is a nonprofit, nonpartisan civic education organization that encourages responsible participation in the democratic process through educational programs and publications in government and citizenship. Since its founding in 1970, Close Up has been committed to developing new and better ways for young people, teachers, and a widening circle of citizens of all ages to gain a practical understanding of how public policy affects their lives and how individual and collective efforts affect public policy. For more information about Close Up programs, call 800-336-5479.

Close Up Publishing, a branch of the Close Up Foundation, develops books, teacher's guides, and other materials designed to encourage critical thinking and inspire interest in current issues, government, foreign affairs, history, and economics. To find out why more and more educators are relying on Close Up's original and timely educational resources, call 800-765-3131.

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Contents

To the Teacher 5

Lesson Plans

Lesson 1: Congress and the Legislative Branch 7

Lesson 2: The Presidency and the Executive Branch 12

Lesson 3: The Supreme Court and the Constitution 16

Lesson 4: The Media and Public Policy 20

Student Handouts

Student Handout 1
Viewer's Guide: Congress and the Legislative Branch 25

Student Handout 2
Viewer's Guide: The Presidency and the Executive Branch 26

Student Handout 3
Viewer's Guide: The Supreme Court and the Constitution 27

Student Handout 4
Viewer's Guide: The Media and Public Policy 28

Student Handout 5
Quotable Quotes: Whom Does a Representative Represent? 29

Student Handout 6
Quotable Quotes: Why Get Involved? 30

Student Handout 7
Quotable Quotes: Why Should the Judiciary Be Independent? 31

Student Handout 8
Quotable Quotes: Do the Media Go Too Far? 32

To the Teacher

In an era of MTV and flashy videos, how can teachers get their students to focus on complex issues in the federal government? That is the challenge that Close Up's "Focus on Government" video series is designed to address. By using fast-paced video clips of government insiders and leading experts, the videotapes capture student interest and stimulate discussion on thought-provoking topics.

About the Video

The "Focus on Government" video series consists of four parts:

- Congress and the Legislative Branch
- The Presidency and the Executive Branch
- The Supreme Court and the Constitution
- The Media and Public Policy

Each of these parts is approximately twelve minutes long and consists of six to seven short segments about key topics. The series features excerpts from the program "Close Up on C-SPAN," produced by Close Up's award-winning television department. In these videos, Washington movers and shakers give your students an insider's view of how government really works.

About the Guide

This teacher's guide is designed to help your students learn more about the processes and principles of American government. The guide is composed of four lessons, each of which can help you enhance or review your unit on that topic. Lesson 1 covers Congress and the legislative branch; lesson 2 deals with the presidency and the executive branch; lesson 3 addresses the Supreme Court and the Constitution; and lesson 4 explores the relationship between the media and public policy.

The guide also provides suggestions for making this video a successful and enjoyable learning experience. The teaching strategies and activities contained in the guide can be used in a variety of ways. Feel free to develop or adapt the activities to suit your teaching style, the needs of your students, and the amount of time you have to cover each topic.

Goals

The videotape and teacher's guide should help students to:

1. Gain a deeper understanding of the three branches of American government, as well as the "fourth branch"—the media.

2. Compare and contrast the responses of Washington experts on key topics involving the Congress, the president, the Supreme Court, and the media.

3. Develop their own opinions on critical issues in American government.

Student Activities

The activities in each lesson are designed to provide your students with a variety of educational experiences, many of which develop higher-order thinking skills. Rather than following a traditional lecture format, all of the activities involve class discussions or small-group work. This active learning approach encourages students to go beyond mere recognition or knowledge of the facts to begin analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating the issues and concepts under study.

Tips on Leading Effective Class Discussions

All of the activities in this guide involve some class discussion. The following procedures will help make your discussion more effective.

- Structure class discussions to involve the entire class; avoid creating a dialogue between the teacher and a few students. Make a special point of encouraging students to speak directly to one another rather than to you.
- Sequence your questions so that more students can participate. Use Bloom's Taxonomy to help you develop your questions. Sequencing is important because it develops a concept or idea from rudimentary to more sophisticated.
- Incorporate "wait time" into your discussion periods. You should wait for all students to respond to a question; if students cannot respond successfully, rephrase the question and try again.

Tips on Conducting Small-Group Work

Small-group work is an important part of the activities in this guide. Stress the need for students to listen, to solicit opinions from all group members, to focus on issues rather than on personalities, to focus on the assigned topic and task, to resolve conflicts, to move the discussion along, and to probe the responses of other students.

Indicate to students that they should work to guarantee that everyone in their group participates. After the activity, conduct an examination of group participation so that students understand that their ability to work together is as important as the conclusions they reach.

LESSON 1

Congress and the Legislative Branch

Objectives

After completing this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Discuss issues related to Congress such as campaign financing, term limits, the budget process, and the balanced budget amendment.

2. Compare and contrast their own opinions on these issues with those of government insiders.

3. Understand the balance a legislator must find between representing constituents and voting his or her conscience.

Procedures

1. Introduce this lesson by conducting a brief review of major topics covered in your unit on Congress. You will want to include:

- political action committees (PACs);
- proposed term limitations for members of Congress;
- how the rules of the legislative process differ in the House and the Senate;
- Congress's role in setting the federal budget; and
- the proposed balanced budget amendment to the Constitution.

After completing your review discussion, tell students they are going to watch a video that includes the opinions of government insiders on key issues involving Congress. Ask students to be prepared to discuss their own opinions on these issues as each topic is raised.

2. Next, distribute **Student Handout 1—Viewer's Guide: Congress and the Legislative Branch.** Instruct students to complete the handout while they are viewing the videotape.

The video "Focus on Government: Congress and the Legislative Branch" is about twelve minutes long and includes seven short segments. To reinforce student learning, stop the videotape after each segment to allow students to write pertinent information on the handout. Then, briefly discuss the questions listed on the following pages for that topic. You might want to use the "About the Speaker" section on page 11 as you proceed through the discussion.

■ POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEES (PACS)

Why does Representative Rose believe that contributions by wealthy individuals are more dangerous than contributions by PACs? Do students agree?

Do students think that campaign contributions should be considered free speech? (The Supreme Court has ruled that in politics "money is speech." Therefore, campaign financing laws are subject to the First Amendment. The Court has upheld laws limiting *direct* contributions to a candidate, because large contributions could imply corruption. But the Supreme Court struck down laws that limited how much individuals could spend independently *on behalf of* a candidate, because such laws restricted freedom of speech.)

■ TERM LIMITS

What does Juan Williams mean when he says that "young Turks" in Congress don't want to "kiss the rings" of the senior legislators? Why would voters think that a member of Congress who supports term limits is like Mr. Smith Goes to Washington? (In this movie, an "average" citizen, Jeff Smith, is appointed by his state's governor to an open seat in the U.S. Senate, where he defies the political machine and earns a reputation for honesty.)

How would term limits restrict the freedom of the voter, as Robert Novak once believed?

Is the presidency really more powerful than Congress, as Representative Rose argues? Would term limits deprive legislators of the opportunity to gain the experience and expertise necessary to balance the power of the presidency?

■ RULES OF HOUSE VS. SENATE: GERMANENESS

Why have legislators established rules for the lawmaking process that are not listed in the Constitution? (The Constitution merely provides the general outlines for the powers of the legislative branch; Article I, section 5 states that "each house may determine the rules of its proceedings.")

Why do nongermane, or unrelated, amendments make legislation more difficult to pass? (Legislators who oppose a bill can propose amendments on unrelated controversial topics that many of the bill's supporters might reject, thus jeopardizing its passage. Lobbyists describe a bill to which legislators have sought to add numerous nongermane amendents as a "Christmas tree"—comparing the amendments to ornaments.)

Why would germane amendments be required in the House and not the Senate? (The House has 435 members compared to 100 for the Senate. If House members were allowed to add nongermane amendments to legislation, the sheer number of possible amendments could make legislation virtually impossible to pass.)

■ BUDGET PROCESS

What would happen if the president and Congress could not agree on a budget by October 1? (The government would shut down due to lack of funds, unless Congress and the president could agree on a continuing resolution—a temporary measure to keep the government running until a budget passes.)

What would happen if the U.S. government shut down, even for a day? (no national defense, no Social Security checks, no money for banks, no aid to students, no federal courts, no guards for federal prisons, etc.)

What is the difference between the budget process in Congress and in the White House, as described by Leon Panetta?

■ BALANCED BUDGET AMENDMENT

Does your state have a balanced budget requirement in its constitution? Have there been any fiscal emergencies as a result, or does the budget process run smoothly?

Why does Senator Trent Lott support a balanced budget amendment?

Why do many Americans oppose a balanced budget amendment? (They argue that a constitutional amendment would not give the nation flexibility to deal with emergencies when they arise—such as during an economic recession or in wartime.)

■ LIFESPAN OF GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

Scott Hodge argues that government programs are difficult to terminate. How might that fact add to the federal budget deficit?

What is former senator William Proxmire's solution to the problem? (requiring programs to end automatically unless Congress specifically votes to renew them)

3. After you play the last segment of the tape, in which Representative Charlie Rose describes his own philosophy of representation, divide the class into groups of three to four students and distribute **Student Handout 5—Quotable Quotes: Whom Does a Representative Represent?** Ask the students in each group to discuss the quotation among themselves and answer the questions on the handout. When students have completed the handout, have one person from each group report that group's findings to the class. After all groups have reported, discuss why some had quite different opinions than others.

Additional Suggestions

1. To give students hands-on experience with the budget process, have them play Close Up's *Slicing the Pie: A Federal Budget Game*. This simulation challenges students to draft specific components of the U.S. budget such as the line items for education, defense, Medicare, Social Security, and the environment. As members of Congress, committee chairs, and lobbyists, your students will learn who the players are in the budget process, the tools they possess, and the strategies they use.

2. Have students research Thomas Jefferson's role in the Louisiana Purchase. They should discover that although Jefferson supported a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution, he advocated deficit spending to buy the land from France—a purchase that doubled the size of the United States. Ask students to write a one-page speech by Jefferson to the Congress justifying his decision and stating whether he would still support a balanced budget amendment. If so, would Jefferson allow any exceptions to the amendment?

3. Former senator William Proxmire—who is featured on the videotape—was noted in Congress for his "Golden Fleece Awards," which singled out extreme examples of wasteful government spending. Ask students to select their own winners of the "Golden Fleece Award" by researching newspaper and magazine articles for government programs they believe should be terminated. In what states are these programs located? Do these states have powerful legislators in Congress? What does this fact suggest about the economic value of these programs to their states and the difficulty of terminating them? Are any of these programs located in your state? What would be the impact on your area if that government program was terminated?

About the Speakers

Charlie Rose has been a member of the U.S. House of Representatives since 1972. A Democrat, he represents North Carolina's 7th District.

Juan Williams writes about social and political issues for the *Washington Post*. Williams also wrote *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years 1954 to 1965*, the companion book to the PBS television series of the same name.

Robert Novak is a nationally syndicated columnist and cohosts several programs on CNN.

Don Nickles is a U.S. senator from Oklahoma. He holds the record for being the youngest Republican ever elected to the Senate (at the age of 31 in 1980).

Leon Panetta is the director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) under President Clinton. Previously, Panetta served eight full terms (and part of a ninth term) as a U.S. representative from California. Panetta, a Democrat, chaired the House Committee on the Budget from 1989 to 1993.

Trent Lott was elected to the U.S. Senate from Mississippi in 1988 as a Republican. He previously served eight terms in the U.S. House of Representatives, beginning in 1972.

Scott Hodge is the Grover M. Hermann Fellow in Federal Budgetary Affairs at the Heritage Foundation, a public policy research institute in Washington, D.C. He is considered a leading expert on wasteful government spending.

William Proxmire represented Wisconsin in the U.S. Senate from 1957 to 1989. Proxmire, a Democrat, is well known for his efforts to curb government spending and has written several books on the subject.

LESSON 2

The Presidency and the Executive Branch

Objectives

After completing this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Discuss issues related to the executive branch such as campaign financing, informal powers of the presidency, the cabinet, the line-item veto, and national security.

2. Compare and contrast their own opinions on these issues with those of government insiders.

3. Analyze the factors that contribute to low voter turnout in presidential elections.

4. Understand the importance of their active participation in the American system of government.

Procedures

1. Introduce this lesson by conducting a brief review of major topics covered in your unit on the presidency. You will want to include:

- presidential campaigns;
- informal powers of the presidency;
- the cabinet;
- the proposed line-item veto amendment to the Constitution; and
- the president's responsibility for national security.

After completing your review discussion, tell students they are going to watch a video that includes the opinions of government insiders on key issues involving the executive branch. Ask students to be prepared to discuss their own opinions on these issues as each topic is raised.

2. Next, distribute **Student Handout 2—Viewer's Guide: The Presidency and the Executive Branch.** Instruct students to complete the handout while they are viewing the videotape.

The video "Focus on Government: The Presidency and the Executive Branch" is about twelve minutes long and includes seven short segments. To reinforce student learning, stop the videotape after each segment to allow students to write pertinent information on the handout. Then, briefly discuss the questions listed on the following pages for that topic. You might want to use the "About the Speakers" section on page 15 as you proceed through the discussion.

■ CAMPAIGNING: PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES

What is one way that the $100 million in public funding for presidential campaigns is raised? (Citizens can check a box on their income tax forms to designate $3 of their taxes for the presidential campaigns.)

Do students agree with John Deardourff that single-issue debates are preferable to thirty-second television commercials in presidential campaigns?

■ INFORMAL POWERS: BULLY PULPIT

What did Theodore Roosevelt mean by the phrase "bully pulpit"? (that the president can use his or her visibility to "preach" to or persuade the American people on certain issues)

Besides civil rights, what are some other issues that could be or recently have been addressed through the president's "bully pulpit"?

■ OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET (OMB)

Have students ever seen a copy of the federal budget? (See if your school library has a copy that the class can examine. It is several inches thick and covers thousands of federal programs.)

How difficult is it, in your students' opinion, for the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to produce the budget book? Are 500 staff members necessary to do the job? (Point out that the executive branch is the largest branch of government, with nearly 3 million civilian employees.)

■ THE CABINET: ADDING THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY (EPA)

Why is legislation necessary if President Clinton has already made the administrator of the EPA part of his cabinet? (The bill would raise the EPA from an independent executive agency to an executive department, which would have a permanent cabinet seat under future presidents.)

Is making the EPA a permanent part of the cabinet largely a symbolic measure, or would the agency's powers actually increase?

■ LINE-ITEM VETO

Do students agree with Senator Trent Lott that the president should be stronger than Congress? Why? How would the line-item veto give the president more power? (The president could delete items that he or she opposed from a bill without vetoing the entire measure, thus taking away Congress's bargaining power on the controversial provisions.) *How could the line-item veto harm the president?* (Vetoing a specific program would expose the president to criticism from its supporters.)

Does the governor in your state have the line-item veto? If so, does the governor overshadow the legislature? Can students think of examples where their governor has used the line-item veto?

■ NATIONAL SECURITY

Do students think that Ambassador Madeleine Albright's definition of national security is too broad?

How could a broad definition of national security increase the president's power?

3. After you play the last segment of the tape, in which OMB Director Leon Panetta encourages students to participate in government, divide the class into groups of three to four students and distribute **Student Handout 6—Quotable Quotes: Why Get Involved?** Ask the students in each group to discuss the quotation among themselves and answer the questions on the handout. When students have completed the handout, have one person from each group report that group's findings to the class. After all groups have reported, discuss why some had quite different opinions than others.

Additional Suggestions

1. Divide the class into four teams. Tell the students that they have been hired as political consultants for the upcoming presidential election. Teams 1 and 2 will represent the Democratic candidate; Teams 3 and 4 will represent the Republican candidate.

The issue they are to consult with their candidates about is how to deal with the federal budget deficit. Allow all teams sufficient time to research the topic. One helpful resource would be Close Up's special focus book *America's Growing Debt: Understanding the Federal Deficit* and its accompanying teacher's guide.

After the teams have completed their research, assign the following tasks:

- Teams 1 and 3 will develop three 30-second commercials for their candidates;
- Teams 2 and 4 will prepare briefing books listing the major points that their candidates should cover in a single-issue debate on the budget deficit.

Have each team present its commercial or briefing book to the class. What are the differences between the type of information presented in the commericals versus a single-issue debate? Which information do students remember best? Which information is the most comprehensive? Should one type of information be used to the exclusion of the other?

2. For a more in-depth look at how past presidents have faced specific issues, show Close Up's videotape "We the People: The President and the Constitution." This two-hour videotape features interviews with former presidents Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter, and Ronald Reagan. It is divided into five parts: the presidency; working with Congress, tools of foreign policy, domestic affairs and presidential power, and reflections on the presidency.

About the Speakers

John Deardourff is a founding partner of Bailey, Deardourff & Associates, a political planning, consulting, and advertising firm.

John Anderson ran for president in 1980 as an independent, garnering about 7 percent of the popular vote. From 1960 to 1980, he was a Republican U.S. representative from Illinois's 16th district.

Leon Panetta is the director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) under President Clinton. Previously, Panetta served eight full terms (and part of a ninth term) as a U.S. representative from California. Panetta, a Democrat, chaired the House Committee on the Budget from 1989 to 1993.

Carol Browner was named administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in January 1993. She previously served as secretary of the Department of Environmental Regulation for the state of Florida.

Trent Lott was elected to the U.S. Senate from Mississippi in 1988 as a Republican. He previously served eight terms in the U.S. House of Representatives, beginning in 1972.

Madeleine Albright is the U.S. permanent representative to the United Nations. She is also a member of the National Security Council.

LESSON 3

The Supreme Court and the Constitution

Objectives

After completing this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Discuss issues related to the judicial branch such as confirmation of Supreme Court nominees, civil rights and the *Brown* decision, cruel and unusual punishment, *Roe v. Wade*, the right to bear arms, and judicial independence.

2. Compare and contrast their own opinions on these issues with those of government insiders.

3. Understand the value of and limitations upon an independent judiciary.

Procedures

1. Introduce this lesson by conducting a brief review of major topics covered in your unit on the Supreme Court and constitutional rights. You will want to include:

- the confirmation process;
- civil rights and the *Brown* decision;
- cruel and unusual punishment and the death penalty;
- the right to privacy and *Roe v. Wade*;
- the right to bear arms; and
- the concept of an independent judiciary.

After completing your review discussion, tell students they are going to watch a video that includes the opinions of government insiders on key issues involving the judicial branch. Ask students to be prepared to discuss their own opinions on these issues as each topic is raised.

2. Next, distribute **Student Handout 3—Viewer's Guide: The Supreme Court and the Constitution.** Instruct students to complete the handout while they are viewing the videotape.

The video "Focus on Government: The Supreme Court and the Constitution" is about twelve minutes long and includes six short segments. To reinforce student learning, stop the videotape after each segment to allow students to write pertinent information on the handout. Then, briefly discuss the questions listed on the following pages for that topic. You might want to use the "About the Speakers" section on page 19 as you proceed through the discussion.

■ POLITICS AND THE CONFIRMATION PROCESS

Do students believe the Senate was justified in refusing to confirm John Rutledge of South Carolina to be chief justice, even though he helped draft the Constitution and had previously served on the Supreme Court as an associate justice? (The Senate refused to confirm Rutledge because after he was nominated he attacked the Jay Treaty, a measure supported by the Federalists in the Senate and by President George Washington.)

Are political factors, such as a nominee's support of particular issues, a legitimate factor in the confirmation process, rather than just the nominee's skills as a lawyer and a judge?

■ CIVIL RIGHTS: THE *BROWN* CASE

What does "separate but equal" mean regarding educational facilities?

Are there magnet schools or busing in your community? How effective have they been in eliminating racial segregation?

■ CRUEL AND UNUSUAL PUNISHMENT: THE DEATH PENALTY

What points did each speaker make? (Leigh Dingerson argues that the death penalty is cruel and unusual punishment—unusual because it is given in only 1 percent of all murders, and cruel because it is used to discriminate on the basis of race and economic status. Richard Samp believes that the death penalty is the only punishment for heinous crimes sufficient to prevent citizens from becoming vigilantes and seeking vengeance themselves.)

Who made the most effective argument? Why?

■ RIGHT TO PRIVACY: *ROE V. WADE*

What limits has the Supreme Court set on the ability of the states to regulate abortion? (In *Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania v. Casey* [1992], the Court ruled that states were free to regulate abortions as long as they did not place an "undue burden" on a woman's right to choose an abortion. The Court did not overturn *Roe v. Wade,* as some experts had predicted, but it did abandon Roe's trimester framework.)

Is Senator Paula Hollinger correct when she argues that a woman should not need the permission of a spouse to get an abortion, because it is not required for any other legal medical procedure? (The Court struck down this requirement in 1992.)

■ RIGHT TO BEAR ARMS

How does Michael Beard support his argument that the Second Amendment protects a collective right to a state militia, not an individual right to bear arms? (No federal court has struck down a gun control law on Second

Amendment grounds, although Mr. Beard is incorrect about the Supreme Court's ruling in the *Morton Grove* case. When a U.S. Court of Appeals reaffirmed that the Second Amendment did not apply to the states in *Quilici v. Morton Grove* (1982), the Supreme Court let the decision stand without reviewing it. The Court did not issue a ruling on whether there was an individual right to bear arms.)

What is Mary Sue Faulkner's response to Mr. Beard? (The Second Amendment only applies to the federal government, not the states, so it does not restrict state gun control laws. However, Ms. Faulkner is incorrect when she states that the Fifth Amendment has not been incorporated by the Supreme Court to apply to the states. Only part of the Fifth Amendment—the grand jury provision—has not been incorporated.)

3. After you play the last segment of the tape, in which syndicated columnist Bruce Fein extols the value of an independent judiciary, divide the class into groups of three to four students and distribute **Student Handout 7—Quotable Quotes: Why Should the Judiciary Be Independent?** Ask the students in each group to discuss the quotation among themselves and answer the questions on the handout. When students have completed the handout, have one person from each group report that group's findings to the class. After all groups have reported, discuss why some had quite different opinions than others.

Additional Suggestions

1. For more in-depth information about the civil rights era, show the Close Up videotape "Democracy and Rights: One Citizen's Challenge." It tells the story of the Little Rock Nine, the black students who integrated Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1957. The videotape shows footage of armed federal troops escorting the students to class, the episode referred to by Paul Rothstein in the "Focus on Government" video.

2. For more in-depth information about the right to bear arms, show the Close Up videotape "To Keep and Bear Arms: Gun Control and the Second Amendment" (available summer 1994). The video explores both sides of the issue through compelling personal stories about violence and gun ownership and thought-provoking interviews with leading constitutional scholars.

About the Speakers

Eugene Hickok is an associate professor in the Department of Political Science at Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. He also serves as an adjunct professor at the Dickinson School of Law and as an adjunct scholar at the Heritage Foundation and the Center for Judicial Studies.

Paul Rothstein is a professor at the Georgetown University Law Center in Washington, D.C., where he teaches constitutional law.

Leigh Dingerson is the director of the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, a post she has held since 1987. She previously headed the South Carolina Coalition Against the Death Penalty.

Richard Samp has been chief counsel at the Washington Legal Foundation since 1989. Samp also serves as an adjunct professor at George Mason University Law School.

Gerard Kosinski spent five terms as a Democratic member of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, retiring in 1992.

Paula Hollinger was elected as a state senator to the Maryland General Assembly in 1987. She previously served as a state delegate from 1978 to 1986.

Michael Beard is the executive director of the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence, which advocates a ban on the importation, manufacture, sale, transfer, ownership, possession, and use of handguns by the general public.

Mary Sue Faulkner is a media liaison in the National Rifle Association's Communications Office.

Bruce Fein is a syndicated columnist and a leading conservative scholar on the U.S. Constitution. He regularly appears on nationally televised news and public affairs programs.

LESSON 4

The Media and Public Policy

Objectives

After completing this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Discuss issues related to the media and public policy such as the impact of television coverage on politics, negative campaigning, investigative reporting and the use of confidential sources, and how the press reported the Persian Gulf War.

2. Compare and contrast their own opinions on these issues with those of government insiders.

3. Understand the role of the news media in a democracy.

Procedures

1. Introduce this lesson by conducting a brief review of major topics covered in your unit on the media. You will want to include:

- television's impact on politics;
- negative campaigning;
- investigative reporting and the use of confidential sources;
- press coverage of sensitive events such as war; and
- the role of the press in a democracy.

After completing your review discussion, tell students they are going to watch a video that includes the opinions of government insiders on key issues involving the media. Ask students to be prepared to discuss their own opinions on these issues as each topic is raised.

2. Next, distribute **Student Handout 4—Viewer's Guide: The Media and Public Policy.** Instruct students to complete the handout while they are viewing the videotape.

The video "Focus on Government: The Media and Public Policy" is about twelve minutes long and includes seven short segments. To reinforce student learning, stop the videotape after each segment to allow students to write pertinent information on the handout. Then, briefly discuss the questions listed on the following pages for that topic. You might want to use the "About the Speakers" section on page 23 as you proceed through the discussion.

■ IMPACT OF TELEVISION ON POLITICS

What factors might cause 70 percent of all Americans to get their information from television?

Why does Helen Thomas believe that television has destroyed the political parties?

What does Jack Anderson mean when he says that because of television, politicians now look like anchormen?

■ NEGATIVE CAMPAIGNING

Do students agree with Mark Gearan that comparing records of the candidates is a fair practice as long as the information is truthful?

Do students believe, as does Reed Irvine, that negative campaigning is effective? Why or why not?

■ PRIVATE LIVES OF CANDIDATES

Does the public have an unlimited right to know about the private lives of political candidates, or just in the circumstances described by Senator Paul Simon?

Do students think Senator Simon is justified in believing that the media focused more on his bow tie than his position on the issues? Why would the media do that?

■ CANDIDATES GOING DIRECTLY TO THE PUBLIC

Did any students see Bill Clinton when he appeared on the Arsenio Hall show during the 1992 presidential campaign? What effect did it have on them?

Is a town-hall style of coverage best, where citizens question the candidates themselves, or should journalists always be present to ask candidates "tough" questions?

■ CONFIDENTIAL SOURCES

What are the advantages of the media's using confidential sources? What are the disadvantages?

Could confidential sources also be used by government officials to leak false information?

■ MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE PERSIAN GULF WAR

What does Ms. Thomas mean when she says that in the Persian Gulf War, the public "saw a video game, not a war"?

Should media coverage be limited in wartime? Why or why not? How would press restrictions be carried out?

3. After you play the last segment of the tape, in which journalists Helen Thomas and Jack Anderson explore the role of the media, divide the class into groups of three to four students and distribute **Student Handout 8—Quotable Quotes: Do the Media Go Too Far?** Ask the students in each group to discuss the quotation among themselves and answer the questions on the handout. When students have completed the handout, have one person from each group report that group's findings to the class. After all groups have reported, discuss why some had quite different opinions than others.

Additional Suggestions

1. Have the class conduct an informal survey of fellow students and members of the community on their media habits. Questions might include where people get their news, how much television news they watch, whether they read a daily newspaper, whether they trust the media, and so forth. Compile the results, and instruct each student to write a few paragraphs about trends in media use based on this information.

2. Assign students to watch a televised press conference in which a governmental official fields questions from reporters. Ask the students to evaluate how well the official answered the questions. How effective was the press conference in uncovering information? Who did best in the press conference—the press or the principal respondent?

3. Have students collect information on one current controversial issue involving the president of the United States, the state's governor, or another elected official. They may use television, newspapers, and magazines. After gathering the information, tell them to discuss the following questions in a three- to five-paragraph paper:

- What is the controversial issue, who and what does it involve, and why is it controversial?
- Are the reports complimentary, critical, or neutral in their discussion of the elected official and the government?
- Do any reports use unidentified sources?
- How does the information presented affect your view of the issue?

About the Speakers

Helen Thomas is a journalist with United Press International (UPI). She was the first woman officer of the National Press Club and the first woman president of the White House Correspondents Association.

Jack Anderson is one of America's most prominent investigative reporters. He coauthors "Washington Merry-Go-Round," a column describing political goings-on in Washington, D.C. He won a Pulitzer Prize in 1972.

Mark Gearan serves as assistant to the president and White House director of communications for President Clinton. In the 1988 presidential campaign, he was headquarters press secretary for Michael Dukakis.

Reed Irvine is the founder and chief executive officer of Accuracy in Media, a watchdog organization.

Paul Simon has represented Illinois in the U.S. Senate since 1984. Previously he was the U.S. representative from Illinois's 24th district for five terms. Simon was a candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1988.

Frances Hardin was a political analyst for C-SPAN and British television during the 1992 presidential election. She has also worked as a White House and general assignment correspondent for CNN.

STUDENT HANDOUT 1

Viewer's Guide: Congress and the Legislative Branch

Topic	*Speaker*	*Major Points*
Political Action Committees (PACs)	Rep. Charlie Rose (D-N.C.)	
Term Limits	Juan Williams *Washington Post* Robert Novak Syndicated Columnist Rep. Charlie Rose (D-N.C.)	
Rules of House vs. Senate: Germaneness	Sen. Don Nickles (R-Okla.)	
Budget Process	Leon Panetta Director, Office of Management and Budget (OMB)	
Balanced Budget Amendment	Sen. Trent Lott (R-Miss.)	
Lifespan of Government Programs	Scott Hodge Heritage Foundation William Proxmire Former Senator (D-Wis.)	
Philosophy of Representation	Rep. Charlie Rose (D-N.C.)	

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STUDENT HANDOUT 2

Viewer's Guide: The Presidency and the Executive Branch

Topic	Speaker	Major Points
Campaigning: Presidential Debates	John Deardourff Political Consultant	
Informal Powers: Bully Pulpit	John Anderson 1980 Presidential Candidate	
Office of Management and Budget (OMB)	Leon Panetta Director, OMB	
The Cabinet: Adding the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	Carol Browner Administrator EPA	
Line-Item Veto	Sen. Trent Lott (R-Miss.)	
National Security	Madeleine Albright U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations	
Participation: People and Politics	Leon Panetta Director, OMB	

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STUDENT HANDOUT 3

Viewer's Guide: The Supreme Court and the Constitution

Topic	Speaker	Major Points
Politics and the Confirmation Process	Eugene Hickok Dickinson College	
Civil Rights: the *Brown* Case	Paul Rothstein Georgetown Law Center	
Cruel and Unusual Punishment: the Death Penalty	Leigh Dingerson National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty Richard Samp Washington Legal Foundation	
Right to Privacy: *Roe v. Wade*	Gerard Kosinski State Representative (D-Pa.) Paula Hollinger State Senator (D-Md.)	
Right to Bear Arms	Michael Beard Coalition to Stop Gun Violence Mary Sue Faulkner National Rifle Association (NRA)	
Independent Judiciary	Bruce Fein Syndicated Columnist	

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STUDENT HANDOUT 4

Viewer's Guide: The Media and Public Policy

Topic	Speaker	Major Points
Impact of Television on Politics	Helen Thomas United Press International (UPI) Jack Anderson Syndicated Columnist	
Negative Campaigning	Mark Gearan Director of Communications White House Reed Irvine Accuracy in Media	
Private Lives of Candidates	Sen. Paul Simon (D-Ill.) 1988 Presidential Candidate	
Candidates Going Directly to the Public	Frances Hardin Political Analyst	
Confidential Sources	Jack Anderson Syndicated Columnist	
Media Coverage of the Persian Gulf War	Helen Thomas United Press International (UPI)	
Role of the News Media	Jack Anderson Syndicated Columnist Helen Thomas United Press International (UPI)	

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STUDENT HANDOUT 5

Quotable Quotes: Whom Does a Representative Represent?

I am a representative of the people of southeastern North Carolina. I am elected to reflect their opinion as expressed to me on how they want me to conduct myself on any given issue. If I know what it is, I should vote the way they tell me to vote, or if I don't, I should be prepared to take the consequences.

Now I feel like I have a right sometimes to feel that the public even is right or wrong on a given issue and that I have the right to reeducate them. If I don't reeducate them—BAM! It's their option. But generally I think I should follow not what's popular at the moment, but that I should follow what the informed people of my constituency, my counties, think that I should do in a vote. It's not a clear, easy question to answer. It depends on the issue that you're talking about.

—Representative Charlie Rose

1. Does Representative Rose describe the proper balance between representing the views of his constituents and voting his own conscience? How so?

2. Would you vote for Representative Rose even if he voted against an issue you cared about in Congress? Why or why not?

3. Consider this scenario:

   You are a member of Congress representing a district in which there are three military bases. The Department of Defense is planning to close two of these bases, where many of your constituents work. You have received hundreds of letters and telephone calls urging you to fight these closings. An independent government study indicates that the two bases are no longer necessary for national security and should be eliminated to save money and fight the federal budget deficit.

   Which of the following actions would you take as your district's elected representative? Why or why not?

   A. Try to persuade your constituents that, like other Americans, they must make sacrifices to help pay the budget deficit and vote to close the bases even if the people in your district do not agree.

   B. Oppose the base closings under any circumstances.

   C. Support the base closings, but introduce legislation to provide extended unemployment benefits to those who lose their jobs as a result.

   D. Propose a compromise bill in which only one military base in your district is closed.

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STUDENT HANDOUT 6

Quotable Quotes: Why Get Involved?

Just remember . . . that people are involved in government back here [in Washington]. Sometimes you lose sight of that. Our democracy really does represent a cross section of people from across the country. Sometimes it's not easy, it's frustrating, because everybody wants to have their say, but the great thing about it is that everybody does participate in our system of government.

And I just would ask you, please participate in our system of government. . . . Get involved, get interested in the issues, and stay in touch with the issues we have to deal with, because we need you just like you need us.

—Leon Panetta

1. The United States has one of the lowest rates of voter participation among the democracies in the world. Its voter turnout for presidential elections is only about 50 percent. Why do you think so few Americans participate in the political process?

2. Should voting be mandatory in America, just like paying taxes? Why or why not?

3. What does Mr. Panetta mean when he says "we need you just like you need us"?

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STUDENT HANDOUT 7

Quotable Quotes: Why Should the Judiciary Be Independent?

The reason why I think our founding fathers should be prided for their genius is they erected a judiciary that gave the occupants of the office an incentive . . . to act independently from the political passions of the time and to enforce rights even if in the short run they proved unpopular. Now that's not a fail-safe system. I have no doubt that if you drafted something that suggested judicial independence under Joseph Stalin or Mao Zedong or Adolph Hitler that they would trample on the constitution and they would simply use their soldiers—the SS or the KGB—to wipe out anybody who made a decision they did not like.

—Bruce Fein

1. How would society function if there were no courts to resolve differences of opinion?

2. An independent judiciary is also an unelected judiciary, which some experts believe can undermine democracy. Does the Constitution give federal judges too much independence by specifying that they are appointed rather than elected, serve for life terms, and can only be removed through impeachment?

3. Consider the Supreme Court decisions in *Brown v. Board of Education* and *Roe v. Wade*. Do these cases illustrate the value or the drawbacks of judicial independence?

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STUDENT HANDOUT 8

Quotable Quotes: Do the Media Go Too Far?

What I try to do is find out what's happening behind the scenes; what I try to do is find out what the government doesn't want me to find out. In today's television world, . . . politicians who speak on television are saying what they want the public to hear. I want to find out what they don't want the public to hear. . . . I like to cover the back rooms; I think that the truth comes out from the back rooms.

—Jack Anderson

I think it [investigative reporting] turns the public against the press, because we always seem to be very irreverent and challenging the powers that be, tearing down their . . . political icons and so forth. So you see this backlash against the press because . . . people do not really understand the role of the press—and that is to be as nosy as possible and as probing as possible.

—Helen Thomas

1. Do you read the newspaper daily and/or watch the news on television? How does each shape your opinion of current events?

2. Do you trust the media to keep you well informed? How much power do you think the media have?

3. What are the advantages to the media's use of confidential sources? What are the disadvantages?

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